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Early Predictors of Downward Assimilation in Contemporary Immigration

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EARLY PREDICTORS OF DOWNWARD ASSIMILATION: A STUDY OF CONTEMPORARY SECOND-GENERATION IMMIGRANTS

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ABSTRACT

In this paper, I focus on the assimilative paths of second generation immigrants using data from the *Children of Immigrants Longitudinal Study*. Primarily my goal is to determine early factors that put these youth at risk of downward assimilation. I use incarceration (in early adulthood) as a conservative measure for downward assimilation. While I recognize that this, in actuality, underestimates the extent of downward assimilation, I feel that it is the most efficient theoretical measure because of its extreme negative, long-term occupational, economic, and social effects. I use logistic regression to analyze a number of independent variables in my attempt to determine some of the early, significant predictors that place adolescents at risk for a downward path into the lower realms of American society. Ultimately, I examine race, length of time living in the U.S., educational-related variables (highest expected education in high school and educational goals of peers in high school), family dynamics/composition (time spent together, parental SES and job-loss), dissonant acculturation (how often parents and children clash over their differences), and feelings of discrimination. With the exceptions of parental socioeconomic status, all of these variables yield significant findings.

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INTRODUCTION

Regarding American society, the assimilation of immigrants and immigrant groups into the mainstream has long been a topic of sociological interest. According to fundamental commonalities among all classical assimilation theories, newcomers to society naturally and inevitably follow a straight-line path into the mainstream. These theories assert that this process is accomplished because ethnically diverse groups, in their eagerness to become part of the host country's dominant society, abandon old cultural and behavioral characteristics and adopt the norms of their new society, which ultimately grants them equal access to its occupational and economic opportunities. While the majority of earlier and predominately European immigrants did eventually accomplish this simple path of assimilation, the Immigration Act of 1965 abolished immigrant selection based on race and national origin, and as a result, vast demographic shifts in U.S. immigration have ensued. A much more ethnically diverse America has therefore emerged spawning a number of new complications regarding assimilation into the American mainstream. This, combined with changes in America's social and economic landscape, has since created the need for newer and more nuanced theories of assimilation.

Today, a number of theorists agree that straight-line assimilation into the American mainstream is not a feasible option for all immigrants. Racial, ethnic, and cultural shifts in contemporary immigrants along with changes in the U.S. labor market have all been vital factors in shaping and altering the assimilation outcomes for post-1965 immigrants. Many argue that recent immigration trends, unlike those seen in earlier

European immigrants, demonstrate immense differences in the assimilation process causing great variances in the ultimate outcomes for immigrants and their children. This concept is at the foundation of *segmented assimilation theory*, which is one of the more popular theories applied to contemporary immigration. It was first introduced by Alejandro Portes and Ming Zhou (1993).

The framework of segmented assimilation theory particularly focuses on second-generation immigrants and the various assimilation trends within this population. While those who deem this theory relevant agree that most ultimately do accomplish straight-line or even upward assimilation, they also recognize that a significant number are at risk of a downward assimilative path. Herbert Gans, who provided groundbreaking insight into the factors that might put second-generation immigrant youth at risk of this, expressed fear of a "second-generation decline" due to exposure of American standards and expectations. According to Portes and Rumbaut (2001), the main concern for the immigrant second-generation is not whether they will assimilate, but instead the direction in which they will assimilate. The key question therefore becomes will the children of this generation improve upon the circumstances of their parents or will they experience downward assimilation, possibly turning to a life on the streets filled with crime, gangs, incarceration etc.

The purpose of this research project is to determine early factors that place second-generation immigrant youth in greater jeopardy of experiencing downward assimilation.

Review of the Literature

A number of factors are essential in shaping the integration of immigrant groups, and because the circumstances surrounding such factors can vary so extremely from one group to another, drastically different outcomes can emerge. The assimilation process, therefore, is very complex and involves a number of dimensions, especially for countries like the U.S. that are so rich in ethnic diversity.

Gordon (1964) proposed that there are seven possible dimensions of assimilation. Marger (2006) discusses the four forms of assimilation that those dimensions entail: *cultural assimilation, structural assimilation, biological assimilation,* and *psychological assimilation*. Biological assimilation is the most ultimate stage of assimilation and involves "the actual merging of formerly distinct groups." It is of no theoretical or empirical concern in this research project. The remaining three dimensions, however, do have at least some theoretical relevance. While cultural assimilation is the focal point, elements of structural and psychological assimilation are examined as well. Cultural assimilation, which is also referred to as *acculturation*, entails the adoption of one group's cultural traits and characteristics (usually those of the host society) by another group. Structural assimilation, which is also referred to as *integration*, deals with the extent to which different ethnic groups interact with each other. In structural assimilation, members within minority groups are "dispersed throughout the society's various institutions and increasingly enter into the social contacts with members of the dominant group." Psychological assimilation, as its name suggests, recognizes an element of individuality and therefore acknowledges the fact that specific members

within the same group may follow differing assimilative paths. Psychological assimilation, in essence, is a transitional process of self-identification and also identification by others. When individuals have psychologically assimilated, they have come to feel themselves as part of the larger society, but the larger society, however, may still associate the individuals with their outside ethnic group, which can ultimately cause a disconnection between psychological assimilation and cultural and structural assimilation (Marger, 2006).

Such reluctance of the majority mainstream to accept an outside ethnic group (or members of ethnic groups) can be caused by a number of factors. As mentioned in the introduction, classical assimilation theories predict a path of straight-line assimilation into the American mainstream resulting in the gradual, yet inevitable, fusion of diverse multiethnic groups. The shortcomings of such assumptions, however, have especially been revealed through assimilation trends in contemporary immigration in the U.S. (Portes and Zhou, 1993). Marger (2006) highlights various factors that can most impact the assimilation process for outside ethnic groups entering into an ethnically and culturally different host society; these factors include *manner of entrance, time of entrance, demographic factors, cultural traits,* and *visibility*.

The manner in which an immigrant group enters into the dominant society is a critical circumstance that can have long term effects and possibly even predict a group's assimilative fate (Portes and Rumbaut, 2001). Whether a group enters voluntarily or involuntarily can greatly alter how it adjusts to the new dominant society as well as how it is accepted by it. For example, African-Americans, who were forced here

involuntarily, entered the country not only as a subordinate group but also as a group imposed upon by an oppressive, discriminating, and dominating social order. As a result, their assimilative experiences in American society have, at the least, been very complicated. Contrarily, early European ethnic groups, who migrated to the U.S. legally and voluntarily, essentially controlled their own fate as they smoothly assimilated into the mainstream.

Regarding time of entrance, this simply means that recent arrivals are faced with greater contention from the host society, and therefore experience decreasing resistance toward assimilation as their time in the country increases. The size of a group and how concentrated or dispersed it is, can greatly affect how a group assimilates into the mainstream as well (Marger, 2006). Typically smaller, more dispersed groups, for example, have an easier time assimilating. Smaller groups are seen as less threatening to the dominant society, and while dispersion ultimately leads to an unavoidable amount of interaction with the host society, concentration essentially ensures a group's retention of its own cultural traits. Although this prolongs assimilation into the mainstream, some experts in contemporary immigration argue that the existence and maintenance of concentrated ethnic enclaves actually serve as a source of security and protection in the assimilation process for immigrants and their children (Portes and Rumbaut, 2001).

Regarding cultural traits and visibility, groups that are both more culturally and visibly comparable to the mainstream host society typically have an easier experience in the assimilation process. Visibility, in fact, is deemed as the single most critical factor affecting an ethnic group's assimilation. According to Marger (2006) "Where physical

differences are obvious, manner of entrance, temporal factors, demographic patterns, and even cultural similarity are of much less consequence…physical differences delay the process of assimilation more than other factors." This therefore suggests that, in addition to the manner of entrance component, contrasting visibility to the dominant majority has also greatly impacted the African-American assimilation process, and it may, in fact, be the strongest factor in their complex and difficult assimilative experiences in American society.

Each of these factors considers circumstances that can impact the host society's willingness or reluctance to accept an outside ethnic group, but factors from the perspective of the outsiders can also play a role in the assimilation process and its outcomes. For example, some immigrants or immigrant groups, although they choose to migrate to the U.S., do not have the desire to culturally assimilate into the mainstream. While they do wish to capitalize on American opportunities, they do not seek for themselves, nor for their children, to become "Americanized."

Focusing on immigration in the U.S., Alejandro Portes has examined the assimilation of immigrants into American society, and in so doing, he has introduced *segmented assimilation*, which has become one of the best known assimilation theories applied to contemporary immigration. This theory recognizes and addresses that the assimilation process for many, including individuals who are part of an ethnic group and ethnic groups as a whole, is fragmented. It also asserts that, despite expectations of earlier assimilation theories, individuals from various ethnic groups integrate into

different segments of American society rather than into one mainstream community (Bundesen, 2004).

Portes has particularly focused on the assimilation of second generation immigrants, which includes immigrant children who have at least one foreign-parent or who are themselves foreign-born but moved to the U.S. before age six. In their examination of the social adaptation patterns of second generation immigrants, Portes and Zhou (1993) particularly concentrate on the various assimilation processes and outcomes of this particular population. From extensive research on this topic, the fundamental concept to emerge has been that of segmented assimilation. In fact Portes referred to this phenomenon as the "key concept" that came out of the *Children of Immigrants Longitudinal Study* (Bundesen, 2004), which is the data source used in this study.

As Portes and Zhou (1993) provide insight into why and how segmentation can occur within the assimilation process, weaknesses of traditional assimilation theories are again highlighted. Major misassumptions initially made about immigrant groups arriving in a new country were that they would automatically seek their host country's acceptance, adopt its cultural traits, and eventually mold into its society and function like native born citizens. For various reasons (such as the factors already discussed: modes of incorporation and reception; economic, social, and demographical shifts; and cultural and visible differences) this process has, at least in a substantial number of cases, failed to occur naturally; instead, contemporary immigrants are assimilating at varying rates into different segments of society.

Portes and Zhou project that in today's "pluralistic, fragmented environment that simultaneously offers a wealth of opportunities and major dangers to successful adaptation…(it) is not whether the second generation will assimilate to U.S. society but to what segment of that society it will assimilate." In fact, they deem the possibility of a straight-forward path of assimilation for all contemporary immigrants implausible, stating that it is a process "subject to too many contingencies and affected by too many variables." They suggest that there are a number of various assimilative outcomes that are occurring across ethnic minorities and that integration into the mainstream U.S. is merely one of them. As a result, they describe the second generation as "undergoing a process of segmented assimilation."

Portes and Rumbaut (2001) explain three distinct paths that direct the assimilation experiences of immigrants; these paths include *consonant acculturation, dissonant acculturation,* and *selective acculturation*. Recognizing the importance of acculturation, which is the process of adopting cultural traits and social patterns of another society (typically the host society), they discuss the enormous impact that it has in guiding the assimilation process. In fact, they suggest that it is not only the first step toward assimilation but that it also has the capacity to predict, if not altogether shape, long-term assimilation outcomes.

They explain that when *consonant acculturation* occurs, immigrant parents and their children assimilate on simultaneous paths. In this form of acculturation, both the parents and their children deny or abandon their natural origins and adopt those of the host country and do so at similar paces. In the second, *dissonant acculturation*,

immigrant parents and children are on differing paths of assimilation. This path of acculturation tends to create generation gaps between parents and children, which can ultimately create conflict in the parent-child relationship and cause immigrant children to become more vulnerable to negative external influences. For these reasons, it is the most troublesome and will therefore be further discussed in following paragraphs. Somewhat of a compromise between consonant and dissonant acculturation, *selective acculturation* is when immigrant children are raised to acknowledge their natural origins while also adopting customs of the host country. Portes and Rumbaut suggest that this is actually the healthiest and most effective form of acculturation for several different reasons. Because individuals do not abandon customs, practices and ideals that are part of their heritage, they are able to secure important elements of self-identity, and by embracing traits of their new society, they are less subject to social isolation. Also, this path of acculturation helps to minimize intergenerational strains, and furthermore it promotes a sense of cohesiveness within the ethnic community, which, as opposed dissonant acculturation, can help to protect immigrant children from discrimination and other harmful external influences.

Specifically focusing on the potential negative outcomes of dissonant acculturation, Portes and Rumbaut state that while this path of acculturation does not necessarily lead to downward assimilation it does put immigrant children at a greater risk toward it, mainly as a result of increased intergenerational strains and exposure to negative peer influences. While the theoretical framework of segmented assimilation theory focuses on all three directions that individuals can assimilate (upward, straight-

line, and downward), Portes and Zhou (1993) are most concerned about downward assimilation. Portes, in fact, has referred to downward assimilation as the most troubling because of its problematic nature (Bundesen, 2004). While expanding on these concerns, Portes and Rumbaut (2001) recognize that not all immigrants and their children are at equal risk of experiencing downward assimilation, and furthermore, there is consistent agreement (Portes and Rumbaut, 2001; Butcher and Piehl, 1998; Rumbaut, 2006) that most immigrants and children of immigrants are able to avoid a downward path of integration into American society and ultimately accomplish success in the assimilation process.

Despite this, however, the number of individuals who do ultimately join the lower realms of society is substantial and sociologically relevant. When discussing today's first and second generation immigrants, Rumbaut et al. (2006) explain that while many are "progressing exceptionally well" there is a "smaller but not insignificant segment of this population" that is essentially being pulled toward a declining assimilative path. With this in mind, it becomes apparent that a number of external factors may play a role in the assimilation process. Determining and understanding the factors that put individuals in greater jeopardy toward a downward assimilative path therefore becomes increasingly important.

Across the literature, a number of scholars seem to agree that there are several demographic and family-related factors in particular that not only contribute to the process of assimilation, but, in some circumstances, also yield problematic outcomes. In fact after examining what makes immigrants more or less prone to downward

assimilation, Portes and Rumbaut (2001) suggest that when considering all of the many components that can impact assimilation it is parental socioeconomic status, family composition, and modes of incorporation that are the strongest predictors of individuals' paths of acculturation and the ultimate assimilation outcomes of those paths; they assert that this is especially the case for those who assimilate downward. In addition to these three components, there seems to be a collective agreement that a number of other factors play a role as well. Shifts in the U.S. economy, race, attitudes toward education, peer influence, length of residence in the U.S., and acculturative paths (especially those creating intergenerational gaps between first and second generation immigrants) are among those consistently mentioned to have such an impact on immigrants and their children as they assimilate into American society (Portes and Rumbaut, 2001; Portes and Zhou, 1993; Torny, 1997; Zhou, 1997; Gans, 1992; Perlmann and Waldinger, 1996). Furthermore, several of these factors often seem to be interrelated. For example, discussions of the economy, SES, and educational factors frequently coincide with one another.

Regarding the economic framework of America, it is suggested that, along with the intergenerational gaps that can be created by dissonant acculturation, a gap between the internalized attitudes of immigrant parents and their children emerges that also increases the likelihood for downward assimilation in the immigrant second generation. In the past, immigrants, even those with little formal education, had access to blue-collar occupations that provided them (and their families) a secure place in middle-class America. Due to shifts in occupational structure, however, such opportunities have

vanished from the American workforce, and because of the measurable reduction of middle class jobs, the U.S. economy now demonstrates trends of an "hourglass" formation, with larger lower and somewhat larger upper classes and a narrowing middle (Portes and Zhou, 1993; Portes and Rumbaut 2001, Rumbaut, 1996; Zuckerman, 2002). Portes and Zhou (1993) state that as a result of this occupational segmentation the children of immigrants are met with particularly daunting challenges regarding their futures.

Providing insight into this, Portes and Rumbaut (2001) explain that while many first generation immigrants enter the U.S. willing to accept the menial, low-skilled and low paying jobs that most natives will not perform (the readily available jobs at the bottom of the hourglass), their children, as a result of growing up in America, ultimately acquire far higher ambitions and expectations**.** Gans (1992) suggested that because of this immigrant children are likely to have higher rates of unemployment and crime; furthermore, he projected that this also creates the risk of a "second generation decline." Portes and Zhou (1993) propose that the American-born expectations of second generation immigrants become particularly problematic when the resources or opportunities that would enable them to accomplish their dreams of economic success are limited or unavailable or when they are influenced by external attitudes, most typically of non-immigrant peers, that disregard the importance of the tools (such as advanced education) that are needed to legitimately achieve upwardly mobile goals.

Perlmann and Waldinger (1996) examine the potential challenges for children of immigrants as well. In their analysis of the "Americanization" process, they also believe

that difficulties unique to this demographic group can emerge, and they too recognize the problematic nature of the circumstances often confronting second generation immigrants whose families are of low socioeconomic, working class status. Although they ultimately express optimism for the futures of generations to come, they project that the scenario faced by this particular population creates the potential for a "second generation revolt." Evidenced in the following quote, they recognize that both exogenous and endogenous factors impact the assimilation process:

> "The immigrants arrive willing to do the jobs that natives won't hold – however low the jobs fall in the U.S. hierarchy, they still offer wages and compensation superior to the opportunities back home. Having been exposed to different wage and consumption standards from the start, the children want more…(which) inheres in the immigration experience, an endogenous source of changing aspirations and outlooks" (p. 912).

Therefore, consistent with Portes and Rumbaut (2001) and Portes and Zhou (1993), Perlmann and Waldinger believe that the causes for the internalized shifts (endogenous) in second generation immigrants' expectations actually derive from experiences and influences in their external environments (exogenous).

Concentrating on the enormous impact that exogenous factors can have on immigrant children, researchers are particularly concerned with social influences. Portes and Rumbaut (2001) explain that while some immigrant offspring are "slated toward a smooth transition into the mainstream," others are "at risk of joining the masses of the dispossessed." Portes and Zhou (1993) suggest that, dependent upon characteristics of immigrants and their children (i.e. socioeconomic status and family composition) as well as the social environment that receives them (i.e. modes of incorporation), "the process of 'Growing up American' can range from smooth acceptance to traumatic confrontation,"

and as a result, assimilation for second generation immigrants in particular is yielding some disturbing trends.

Rumbaut et al. (2006) also concentrate on the negative impact that growing up American can ultimately have on the immigrant second generation. Supporting the belief that "Americanization" is a possible contributor to downward assimilation, their findings reveal that while immigrants (regardless of nationality) have the lowest incarceration rates in American society they become increasingly prone to imprisonment the longer they live in the U.S. or, in other words, the more "Americanized" that they become. More specifically, their analysis of census data indicates that in "every ethnicity without exception" there is a sharp increase in incarceration rates between the foreign-born and the native-born male generations and also over time in the United States amongst the foreign-born, especially those who are less educated.

The challenges of growing up in America and the exogenous factors that can affect this process can be particularly harsh for immigrant youth. In addition to going through the transitions and dealing with the challenges typically faced by teenagers, immigrant adolescents are also often torn between two conflicting worlds. As they attempt to adapt into the society surrounding them, the socialization process often greets them with a harsh reality. Portes and Zhou (1993) explain that when immigrant youth do not abandon their native customs and values but instead seek to preserve "ethnic solidarity," they put themselves at risk of becoming targets of social exclusion and ridicule by their peers. However, when they adopt their peers' attitudes and customs they

are essentially choosing to abandon their heritage and often their parents' goals for them, enhancing the potential for dissonant acculturation and its negative effects.

Portes and Zhou go on to explain that the adoption of such attitudes, in addition to the intergenerational strains it can afflict, can yield astoundingly negative consequences, especially for those who are raised in poor, urban America. Portes and Rumbaut (2001) are concerned about the impact of living in these types of environments and the effects it can ultimately have on the immigrant second generation. They fear that children of poor, working-class immigrants become at risk of joining a "rainbow underclass" as a result of the impoverished environments in which often reside. In expressing his concern about issues facing the children of post 1965 immigrants and some of the negative trends that have surfaced within this population, Zuckerman (2002) states that "They form a rainbow underclass, caught in a cycle of downward assimilation, poverty combined with racial segregation. Often…they reject their parent's values, succumb to the dangers of an overcrowded inner-city culture…(and) adopt the negative behavior patterns of their peer groups."

Expressing consistent concerns, Portes and Zhou (1993) explain that these immigrant youth are not only met with the inequality and despair by which inner cities in the U.S. are typically characterized, but they are also exposed to native minority youth who essentially instill in them an awareness of the discrimination and oppression that exists for minorities in American society, especially those with notable visible differences such as darker skin tones. In this environment, they are prone to exposure of life on the streets where violence and gangs are prevalent (Rumbaut, 2006), and as a result,

integration toward and acceptance of the native population's attitudes and customs can actually instill in immigrant youth the adoption of aversive attitudes toward assimilating into the U.S. mainstream (Portes and Zhou, 1993), which in effect increases their chances of downward assimilation (Portes and Rumbaut, 2001). Waldinger and Perlmann (1997) recognize this tendency as well and point out that this idea actually "shadows" elements of anthropologist John Ogbu's theory about oppositional cultures, which essentially projects that continued feelings of oppression and discrimination ultimately cause individuals to adopt an adversarial stance towards the ideals and cultural traits of the mainstream while also "breeding" an intense closeness within the subordinate group (Ogbu, 1978).

Discussing the negative effects of low-income neighborhoods and their high concentration in urban cities, Zhou (1997) anticipates similar effects. She discusses the impact that these environments have on the individuals who reside in them, and she is particularly concerned with the young people whose expectations are shaped by the "world they see around them." Regarding native minority youth, she projects ideas that mirror those of Ogbu; she states that oppositional cultures often emerge among youth who are dealing with feelings of alienation and social isolation as a result of being "excluded from" and "oppressed by" the American mainstream. She goes on to say that as a result of these feelings, along with living in "a disruptive urban environment caught between rising hopes and shrinking opportunities," minority youth grow to resent the middle class and reject mobility goals, and because many poor, low-skilled immigrants dwell within the poverty stricken environments often defined by many inner cities,

immigrant children are exposed to this and therefore become prone to internalizing the same attitudes.

In making her point, Zhou also highlights how the educational resources, as well as the educational aspirations of youth, are impacted by these circumstances. Because public school attendance is determined by residential location the economic conditions of these neighborhoods also permeate the education system, and furthermore, the negative social influences that immigrant youth are already being exposed to outside of school are strongly reinforced. Based on these circumstances the educational experiences of these youth are often profoundly negative. According to Zhou students in schools shape one another's attitudes and expectations; therefore, the infliction of native-born peers' views toward education can be especially problematic for immigrant children.

Portes and Zhou (1993) explain that as a result of the frustration and oppression they feel from their external environments native minority youth have become incredibly skeptical about school achievement as a feasible means for socioeconomic advancement and upward mobility. They also believe that these negative views and attitudes toward the value of education are spread to and internalized by other youth. Similarly, Portes and Rumbaut (2001) believe that exposure to these attitudes can ultimately put immigrant youth at an increased risk of downward assimilation because, as a result of such influences, the importance of education as a legitimate tool for upward mobility often becomes devalued or altogether disregarded. Zhou (1997) elaborates on the substantial proportion of today's second generation living in disadvantaged, inner-city neighborhoods and attending underprivileged schools. Pointing out that these schools are

typically consumed with other immigrant and/or minority children who have adopted incredibly pessimistic views toward education, she states:

> "These schools provide poor learning environments and are often even dangerous places. Many immigrant children find themselves in classrooms with other immigrant children speaking a language other than English or with other native minority children, who either have problems of keeping up with schoolwork or consciously resist academic achievement. Because students in schools shape one another's attitudes and expectations, such an oppositional culture negatively affects educational outcomes of immigrant children" (p. 981).

This quote therefore highlights the hardships that many immigrant and other minority youth often face in their educational experiences as well as the negative social influences of their peers. Considering these circumstances, Zhou points out that family socioeconomic status remains one of the most critical circumstances for immigrant families as they integrate because it is one of the key factors predicting the social and environmental contexts in which they reside. For immigrant children, it therefore defines the type of neighborhoods they live in which in turn determines the quality of the schools they attend and the peers with whom they associate. As a result, this causes discrepancies in the adaptation and integration of various immigrant groups to inevitably occur; concerns for these differences, and more importantly the inequalities that can surface as a result of them, are of great interest to segmented assimilation theorists.

Portes and Rumbaut (2001) suggest that, in addition to family socioeconomic status, race plays a key role in shaping the immigrant assimilation process as well. In fact, they believe that race can be so influential for some immigrants and immigrant groups as they adapt that its impact ultimately supersedes that of familial class status. Similarly, Zhou (1997) asserts that race effects immigrant adaptation in ways similar to

that of family socioeconomic status. Furthermore, it is suggested that, in addition to socioeconomic factors, the issues of residential segregation that have just been highlighted also exist and, more importantly, persist as a result of race. In fact, Portes and Rumbaut (2001), in part, blame prolonged racial discrimination as a catalyst for the inequality evidenced in residential segregation, especially in poor, urban America.

Freeman (2002) examined residential/spatial assimilation of black immigrants and ultimately reported findings that, according to him, "support the contentions of segmented assimilation theorists who posit that race is a major obstacle that will hinder the smooth transition into mainstream society for some immigrants." He found results indicating that race does in fact influence the spatial assimilation of Black immigrants. In fact, he states that regarding the segregation patterns of immigrants their ethnicity is "subsumed under their race." More specifically, he explains that when compared to immigrants whose skin color "does not matter" black immigrants are not only more likely to live closer to other blacks, but they are also much more highly segregated from whites, which one might argue automatically limits opportunities to assimilate smoothly into the mainstream. Based on this, Freeman deems race as "the master trait" of residential segregation. Building on this, Portes and Zhou (1993) explain that in some cases immigrant groups become labeled with certain racial identities because of the neighborhoods where they live. In essence, members of the dominant society come to associate immigrants with the native-born populations that also reside there. Therefore, some immigrant groups are assigned racial identities by the mainstream simply as a result of residential proximity to native minorities, which further highlights inequalities that can

occur as a result of residential segregation especially for those immigrant groups living in poor, urban America.

Expanding on the structural framework of segmented assimilation theory, Portes and Zhou (1993) discuss conceptualizations of race as it has become socially constructed in American society, and they acknowledge that there are variances between different black immigrant groups in the extent to which they identify with native blacks. Some groups are more reluctant and slower to adopt a black racial identity than others because of the challenges that being black in America can present. As with other issues faced by immigrants, they explain that this process can be particularly complex for immigrant children. Consistently, Vickerman (1999) recognizes that there are varying degrees in which black immigrants assimilate into and ultimately embrace a black racial identity as well. Portes and Zhou (1993) suggest that this is because immigrants believe there are negative connotations often associated with being black in the U.S., and by adopting a black racial identity, they feel they are placing themselves at greater risk for downward assimilation. Vickerman (1999) asserts that the distance that many black immigrants initially establish between themselves and native-born blacks is often greatly diminished as immigrants' time in the country increases. He believes that this occurs because foreign-born blacks come to relate to and identify more with native-born blacks over time because of their continued experiences with racial discrimination.

Benson (2003) obtained results supporting this notion as well. In the article "The Cultural Assimilation of Black Immigrants," Benson examines common fate identity of black immigrants as well as their perceptions of discrimination. Ultimately, the findings

reveal telling information about the assimilation and adaptation process for black immigrants, demonstrating that the more time, exposure, and experience black immigrants have in the U.S. the more they come to identify with native-born blacks in their attitudes and perceptions of race and how it functions as a social construct in American society. More specifically, those who have spent ten or more years in America are more likely to culturally assimilate and identify with their native-born counterparts, deriving in large part from their experiences with discrimination especially in housing and job opportunities. Portes and Zhou (1993) state that in addition to their facing "greater obstacles" to assimilate into the white mainstream nonwhite immigrants are also more likely to receive unequal compensation for their educational attainment and/or work experience. Therefore, Benson (2003) concludes that foreign-born blacks ultimately assimilate toward native-born blacks as a result of their becoming more "cognizant of the racially tinged hurdles blocking their mobility."

In sum, segmented assimilation theorists are concerned with a number of factors that they feel ultimately effect the assimilation experiences for immigrants and their children. As highlighted in the literature, some factors are believed to be so influential that they can even guide the overall direction in which individuals assimilate. For example, socioeconomic status and family dynamics, race, paths of acculturation, attitudes toward education, peer influence and discrimination are among those mentioned to possibly have such an impact. Using a secondary data source (the *Children of Immigrants Longitudinal Study*), I examine these factors to determine the role they play as early predictors for downward assimilation.

METHOD

Participants and Instrumentation

For this study, no new instrumentation was designed. In this research project, I use data from a secondary source, the *Children of Immigrants Longitudinal Studies (I, II,* and *III*), to determine significant early predictors of downward assimilation in second generation immigrants. The researchers of this study describe the immigrant second generation as U.S. born children who have at least one foreign-born parent or children who were born abroad or arrived to the U.S. prior to the age of six. This study, which was designed to examine the adaptation process of the immigrant second generation, is a longitudinal study that contains data about the participants at three different points in their lives. The first survey, the *CILS-I*, was conducted in 1992 and had a sample size of 5,262; at the time, the participants were in the 8th and 9th grades. This initial phase of the *CILS* study gathered thorough baseline information about the immigrant families and particularly focused on the children. Information obtained through this phase of the study includes demographics, language use, self-identities, and academic performance and expectations.

Three years after this initial phase, a follow-up survey was conducted (*CILS-II*); this survey was administered when the respondents were in their junior and senior years of high school. In this study, approximately 81.5% of the original respondents participated (N= 4,288). The goal of this study was to analyze how respondent characteristics measured in the first survey had evolved. Therefore, like the initial survey, this follow-up study, which was a self-administered questionnaire that the participants

completed at school, also gathered information about language use, ethnic identity, academics etc. Additionally, some of the parents of the participants also participated in this phase of the study (n=2,442) through face-to-face interviews in their homes; no data from the parent interview will be used in this study.

The third and final phase of this study, the *CILS-III*, contains data that was collected over a two to three year time span when the participants were young adults. In this final wave, a total of 3,344 of the original respondents participated, which totals to 64% of the original participants. In this survey, which included some similar demographic variables to before, researchers were able to explore areas beyond those in the previous two surveys since the participants had transitioned to a new phase of life (early adulthood). For example, details of participants' post-secondary education, labor market experience, language retention, religious observance, civic and political involvement, and criminal history were gathered. The data from this survey have been released and are publicly available. This and more information, as well as the actual *CILS* questionnaires and data, are available online at http://cmd.princeton.edu/cils%20iii.shtml.

Procedure

Reflecting on the literature about segmented assimilation and more specifically downward assimilation, I incorporate an array of variables that I believed would significantly impact assimilative processes and outcomes for this population. Ultimately, I examine basic demographic factors, length of time in the U.S., educational related variables, family dynamics, dissonant acculturation, and perceived discrimination. As an

operationalization of downward assimilation, I use incarceration as an imperfect measure for the dependent variable. I opted to use incarceration because of its negative, long-term implications. While being arrested might indicate that one is potentially headed toward a downward path, incarceration usually guarantees a permanent place in the lower realms of society. Bruce Western (2007) provides support for this. He proclaims that for several reasons individuals' future life chances are greatly reduced once they have been incarcerated. He explains that, because of negative stigmas, time out of the labor force, and weakened social connections, incarceration leads to limited access to legitimate employment opportunities which often becomes a lifelong challenge for previous inmates.

Logistic regression is used to analyze the independent variables as possible early predictors of downward assimilation. By using this type of model, I am able to explore and reveal how socioeconomic status, race, gender, educational aspirations, length of time in country, family composition, dissonant acculturation and perceived discrimination shape the assimilative experience of second generation immigrants, and more specifically whether these factors lead to a downward path in the assimilation process. Controlling for certain variables is beneficial in establishing the strength of significance between these independent variables and the dependent variable. Because of the data source that I am using in this study, I do not feel capable to speculate on any threats to validity within the actual study, data, or instrumentation. I do, however, believe that utilizing a secondary data source could potentially present validity threats in this specific project. Mainly, my ability to understand the variables as well as other

elements of this research project may be compromised. Fortunately, however, Dr. William Haller, Professor of Sociology here at Clemson University, was actively and directly involved in the *Children of Immigrant and Longitudinal Study*. Serving as my advisor, he has been available to me for consultation and direction. Additionally, the homepage website for this study (http://www.cmd.princeton.edu) has served as a great resource tool.

Variables

Overview. In this study, I ultimately use a number of variables from the different phases of the *CILS*. Because the dependent variable is from the *CILS-III*, I focus on variables from the *CILS-I* and *CILS-II* questionnaires for the independent variables. I do this because the purpose and goal of this research project is to determine early predictors of downward assimilation and also because using variables that were obtained closer to the event of the dependent variables (serving time), and especially variables that are from the same wave of data, ultimately causes some obscurity in the cause-effect dynamic between the independent and dependent variables. In the paragraphs below, I discuss each of the variables ultimately examined in the models presented.

Incarceration Rates **(Dependent Variable):**

Time served. As previously discussed, I use incarceration rates for the dependent variable as a representation of downward assimilation because of its negative, long-term implications. On the *CILS-III* questionnaire, several questions probe the respondents about their criminal pasts. For the dependent variable in this study, I use the *CILS-III* survey item asking respondents if they had served time in the past five years (see Appendix). Based on the time frame in which the *CILS-III* was conducted, the majority

of the respondents should have been in their young to mid twenties at the time. Therefore, this variable is a measure of whether the respondents had already been incarcerated as young adults. A total of 3,344 of the original participants completed the *CILS-III*. Of those, there were 154 who reported serving time. It is speculated, for a number of reasons, that the frequency of incarceration for the entire sample is actually substantially larger. One suggestion is that there are some respondents who had not yet been incarcerated when they completed the *CILS-III* but most likely have served time since then, which means they have now become prone to the negative long-term implications of incarceration. Also, it is assumed that within a number of the missing cases (those who did not participate in the third phase of the study) as well as a number of the missing values (those who completed the third phase of the survey but did not answer this particular survey item) there is a substantial number of individuals who had been incarcerated or who were incarcerated at the time of the survey, (Professor William Haller, Clemson University).

Control Variables:

Lambda. After all three phases of the *CILS* were complete, the researchers believed that the amount of missing variables, especially in the final phase, were potentially problematic. Because 36% of the original respondents did not participate in the *CILS-III*, they recognized possible issues for selection bias and therefore deemed it necessary to create a measure to correct for this (Portes and Rumbaut, 2005). According to Portes and Jensen (1989) the longitudinal nature of the *CILS* creates the opportunity to construct corrective measures. By utilizing variables from the initial phase of the study (because there are no missing cases), one can help to account for missing cases in later phases. In

fact, based on how the missing cases compare characteristically to those who completed the entire study, it not only becomes possible to control for possible selection bias and diminish the possibility of inaccurate findings, but it also allows some degree of prediction for those who dropped out of the study.

The variable that *CILS* researchers created to compensate for these concerns, *lambda*, is a thorough compilation of several variables from the *CILS-I*: age, family structure (intact family), GPA, and parental SES. Regarding how lambda is constructed and, more specifically, how it applies to the models in this particular study, significant values will indicate that there in fact are potential problems with sample attrition and therefore that the inclusion of lambda as a control variable was in fact necessary. Also based on how this variable is operationalized it is desirable that the results yield positive B-coefficients and odds ratios greater than one. These results are desirable because such findings will indicate that missing *CILS-III* respondents would have had higher odds of incarceration than those who completed all three phases of the study and more specifically that the lost respondents from the *CILS* study are more characteristically and statistically like those who had been incarcerated than those who had not. These lambda scores are also desirable because they will therefore validate the theory that incarceration rates are, in actuality, substantially larger than the frequencies in the *CILS* study indicate, lending credence to the suggestion that the reported results underestimate the true rate of incarceration and are thus conservative.

Gender. It is widely known that incarceration in this country is a highly male phenomenon. In fact, statistics from the U.S. Department of Justice website state that

93% of all incarcerated individuals are men. Also, according to their projections regarding individuals' lifetime likelihood of going to State or Federal prison in the U.S., the percentage chances for men are 11.3% while the chances for females are only 1.8%. In June of 2007, the number of females who were under the jurisdiction of state or federal authorities totaled 115,308 while the number of men was overwhelmingly higher at 1,479,726. When compared in a crosstab to the dependent variable, the gender variable shows that 127 of 1,459 men had served time while only 27 of 1,739 women had been incarcerated (see Table 1 for descriptive statistics). Based on these numbers, the possible impact of gender in the following models is evident. Because of this, it is incorporated into all of models as a control variable in order to minimize inaccurate findings regarding the impact of other independent variables. Women are the reference group; men are therefore compared to women in the regression models.

Demographics:

Race. As previously discussed segmented assimilation theory hypothesizes that race can play a major role in the assimilation of immigrant groups and, more specifically, that darker skinned immigrants have a more challenging path to upward mobility and successful assimilation than do those who appear more racially similar to white mainstream America. Department of Justice statistics support the idea of race as a significant factor of incarceration and arguably downward assimilation. Findings released in June of 2007 reveal that there were 4,618 black male sentenced prisoners per 100,000 black males in the U.S. For Hispanics, there were 1,747 sentenced males per 100,000 Hispanic males, and for whites males, there were 773 per 100,000 who were sentenced prisoners.

In the *CILS* dataset there are a number of variables that include information about respondents' ethnicity, nativity, and race. For this study, I use a categorical variable from the *CILS-III* asking respondents which race they consider themselves to be. The reason I chose to use a variable that measured race instead of ethnicity or nativity was because of the social implications that the term "race" carries in American society. While ethnicity and nativity are more objective and based on country of origin, racial identification, as previously discussed, can be a complex process that entails elements of subjective internalizations as well objective identifications.

The five response categories for the race variable are white, black, Asian, multiracial, and other. In the regression model, this variable is operationalized so that whites are the reference category, and the remaining categories are compared to them in the regression models. The racial make-up of respondents when compared in a crosstab to the dependent variable includes 794 white respondents with 22 reports of incarceration, 214 black respondents with 14 reports of incarceration, 737 Asian respondents with 26 reports of incarceration, 365 multiracial respondents with 20 reports of incarceration, and 1,019 respondents who selected the other race category with 70 reports of incarceration (see Table 1 for descriptive statistics).

It is important to mention the special issues that come along with the other race category. What is most concerning is the ambiguity that this element of the race variable presents due to the fact that the term "other" is so unclear, unlimited and undefined. As an extension of this category, there is a variable in the *CILS* dataset immediately following in which respondents were asked to specify from "other." For clarification

purposes, I ran a crosstab on this variable to examine which races/ethnicities were most prominent and more importantly which ones had the highest reports of incarceration. In total, this variable contains 1,023 respondents with 68 reports of incarceration (ratio=1:15). Of the many various racial categories that were entered, the Hispanic category is the most prominent. About 520 respondents reported their self-considered race as Hispanic, and approximately 35 of them had been incarcerated (ratio=1:14). Because respondents typed in these answers, there were a number of typographical errors, which is the reason the numbers are approximated.

Aside from Hispanics, there are several other categories that are worthy of mention. The Mexican and Mexican-American categories contain a combined total of 134 respondents with 14 reported incarcerations (ratio=1:9). Also, there were forty respondents who reported their race as "Filipino," and three of them had been incarcerated (ratio=1:12). Of all 1,023 respondents who completed the variable to specify their race further and numerous categories, Hispanics, Mexican/Mexican-Americans, and Filipinos account for 695 of them; furthermore, these categories contain more than 50 of the 68 reports of incarceration.

Length of Residence:

Time in the U.S. Assimilation is a timely process, and as previously discussed elongated exposure to and continuous contact with native born populations is believed to shape the assimilative experiences and outcomes of immigrants, which can sometimes have negative effects. Based on the idea of "Americanization" in segmented assimilation theory one can therefore expect downward assimilation to occur over a period of time. Butcher and Piehl (1998) found time of entrance in the U.S. to be a significant factor

regarding the incarceration rates of immigrants. They claim that immigrants arriving earlier are more likely to serve time than recent arrivals and that as time in the county increases the inclination toward incarceration does as well. The findings of Rumbaut et al (1996) support this as well, and they also reported those who were native-born were much more prone to incarceration as well.

Based on this, I created a variable for year of entrance into the U.S. This variable splits respondents into two separate groups. The reference group includes all respondents who arrived to the U.S. after 1983, and the dummy variable includes those who were either born in the U.S. or entered the country before 1984. Because the *CILS-III* was administered to participating respondents between 2001 and 2003, the dummy variable includes those who had been living in the U.S. for at least 18 to 20 years. The reference category includes 517 participants with 14 reports of incarceration, and the dummy variable containing native-born and pre-1984 arrivals consists of 2,681 respondents with a total of 140 reports of time served (see Table 1 for descriptive stats).

Education-Related Variables:

Realistically Expected Level of Education. This variable is from the *CILS-II* and measures the highest level of education that respondents, as high schoolers, believed was "realistically attainable." As previously discussed, Portes and Zhou (1993) and Portes and Rumbaut (2001) believe that some second generation immigrants are at a greater risk of downward assimilation because they come to delegitimize the value of education and its power as a tool for accomplishing upward mobility. It is theorized that this happens for a number of reasons, one of which stems from their coming to view higher education

as an infeasible option for themselves. I therefore examine educational achievement expectations of teenagers to determine how circumstances later in life might be affected.

The response options for this variable range from less than high school to finish a graduated degree. The categories in between include "finish high school," "finish some college," and "finish college." I split this variable into two separate categories. The reference group, which includes the first three categories, consists of all the respondents who did not believe a college degree (or above) was a viable option for them in the future. The dummy variable compared against the reference group therefore includes the respondents who believed a degree, bachelor's or maser's, was a realistic option for them in the future. Altogether, the reference group contains 417 respondents with 41 reports of serving time, and the dummy variable representing those who believed a college degree was realistically attainable consists of 2,480 respondents with 76 reported events of incarceration (see Table 1 for descriptive statistics).

Educational Plans of Friends. This variable is also from the *CILS-II* and measures the educational plans of respondents' friends. It is an extension of the previous one, and it is incorporated into the model based on the belief of segmented assimilation theorists who propose that adolescents' educational goals, plans, and pursuits are directly shaped by peer influence (Duncan, Haller and Portes 1968, Zhou 1997, Portes and Zhou 1993). This variable is also included to test the assumption that if respondents' friends had realistic plans to attend college then, presumably, they too would be more inclined to believe it was a realistic and viable option for themselves.

The specific variable that was used for this measure questioned the respondents on how many of their friends had plans to attend a four year college. Response options were "None," "Some," and "Many or Most." In the regression model, those who said many or most of their friends were planning to attend a four year college is the dummy variable and is compared to the reference category including those who said only some or none of their friends were college-bound. In a crosstab, the results show that 1,359 respondents said most of their friends were planning to go to college; thirty-one of them had been incarcerated. In the reference category, there were 1,529 respondents with 86 reports of serving time (see Table 1).

Family Composition Variables:

Time Spent with Family. As previously mentioned, segmented assimilation theory suggests that immigrant children who are in closer knit families are more protected from negative external influences and therefore less prone to downward assimilation (Portes and Rumbaut, 2001). The next variable measures the extent to which respondents and their families liked to spend free time together. The five responses options for this variable include "never," "once in a while," "sometimes," "often," and "always." In this study, the reference group includes those who said their families often or always spent their free time together; it contains a total of 1,232 respondents with 32 reports of incarceration. The remaining categories are operationalized so that those who said that their families never spent free time together or that they only spent free time together once in a while are combined together (Note: This dummy variable is referred to as "rarely" in Table 2), and those who reported that their families sometimes liked to spend free time together are compared separately in the regression models. Altogether, the

dummy variable referred to as "rarely" contains 782 respondents with 52 reports of serving time. The dummy variable representing those who said their families sometimes liked to spend time together includes 882 respondents with 34 reports of serving time (see Table 1 for descriptive statistics).

Socioeconomic Status. As previously, mentioned, parental socioeconomic status is believed to be a major factor shaping the assimilation process (Portes and Rumbaut, 2001). For the purpose of this study, I therefore seek to determine if it is a significant early predictor of downward assimilation. To do so, I use a socioeconomic index variable that was designed by the actual *CILS* researchers; it is a thorough compilation of several variables from the *CILS-I*, including parent income, occupation, education, and home ownership. This index is standardized, with a mean of 0 and a standard deviation of one. Therefore its values represent the actual z-scores for each respondent.

Parent(s) Lost Job. This variable is from the *CILS-II*. It comes from a series of questions asking respondents about some various things that may have happened to or within their families during the three years between their completing the *CILS-I* and the *CILS-II*. It is a measure of whether (at least) one of their parents had lost his/her job at some point during that time period. I include this variable to further measure how family dynamics, especially regarding financial strains, can impact the assimilative path. Also, I felt that this variable helps to compensate for some important socioeconomic-related shifts that may have occurred between the first and second phase of the study.

The reference group includes those who said that neither of their parents had lost his/her job within the past few years. It consists of 2,172 respondents; seventy-seven of

them had been incarcerated. The dummy variable in the regression models therefore includes those who reported that one of their parents had lost his/her job within the previous three years. In this category there are 710 respondents; forty had served time (see Table 1 for descriptive statistics).

Acculturative Path:

Dissonant Acculturation. As discussed earlier, Portes and Rumbaut (2001) believe that acculturative paths are highly influential in shaping assimilation outcomes. More specifically, they believe that dissonant acculturation causes immigrant children to become more prone to downward assimilation because of the intergenerational strains it can create. On the *CILS-I*, several questions probed respondents about their parents' as well as their own cultural preferences by asking them how often their parents' preferred the "American way" and then how often they themselves preferred it. Directly following these two questions the survey asked respondents how often they got in trouble with their parents because their ways of doing things were different. This survey item is the measure for dissonant acculturation that is incorporated into Model 4. To gauge the extent to which respondents got in trouble or clashed with their parents for their culturally different preference, they were given the answer options "all of the time," "most of the time," "sometimes," and "never."

For this variable, respondents who reported a substantial amount of conflict (which I include as those who said they got in trouble with their parents all or most of the time for doing things differently) are compared to the reference group which consists of the respondents who said they never or only sometimes got in trouble with their parents

for their culturally different ways. In a crosstab, there were 799 respondents who reported getting in trouble with their parents most or all of the time for those differences; a total of 49 of them had served time as young adults. The reference group contains 2,379 respondents claiming not to get in a significant amount of trouble with their parents for doing things differently; seventy-seven of them had been incarceration (see Table 1).

Discrimination:

Feelings of being discriminated against. As previously mentioned, it is believed that exposure to racial inequalities in American society can ultimately cause black immigrants to assimilate towards native born blacks, even when they are initially very hesitant to do so. For the purpose of this study, I further examine the impact of perceived discrimination by seeking to determine whether the internalization of such experiences might actually lead to downward assimilation. To do so, I use a survey item from the *CILS-II* that followed a number of statements gauging respondents' general opinions of race and racial discrimination in America. It asked them if they personally had ever "felt discriminated against." The dummy variable includes those who had experienced feelings of discrimination and contains a total of 1,815 respondents with 88 reports of serving time. The reference category, those who said they had not ever felt discriminated against, totals 1,073 with 30 incidents of incarceration (see Table 1).

Table 1: Descriptive Statistics

	Valid %	Incarceration Ratio
Demographic Variables:		
Self-Considered Race (Mode=5):		
1 White	25.5	1:35
2 Black	7.1	1:14
3 Asian	23.1	1:27
4 Multiracial	11.6	1:17
5 Other	32.5	1:14
Length of Residence:		
Time in U.S. (Mode=2):		
1 Post-1983 arrivals	16.3	1:36
2 Native-born and pre-1984 arrivals	83.7	1:18
Education-Related Variables:		
Realistically Expected Education (Mode=5):		
1 Less than high school	.4	1:8
2 Finish high school	6.4	1:8
3 Some college	10.9	1:10
4 Bachelor's degree	38.0	1:23
5 Master's degree	44.2	1:44
Friends Going to College (Mode=2):		
1 None	7.5	1:10
2 Some	47.7	1:18
3 Many or most	44.8	1:43
Family-Related Variables:		
Family Spends Time Together (Mode=3):		
1 Never	4.4	1:11
2 Once in a while	22.6	1:15
3 Sometimes	25.5	1:25
4 Often	23.3	1:32
5 Always	13.2	1:60
Parent Lost His/Her Job (Mode=2):		
(between the CILS-I and CILS-II) :		
1 Yes	11.3	1:17
2 No	88.7	1:28
Dissonant Acculturation:		
Clash with Parents over Differences (Mode=3):		
1 All of the time	8.0	1:14
2 Most of the time	18.4	1:16
3 Sometimes	42.1	1:20
4 Never	31.5	1:27
Feelings of Discrimination:		
Ever Been Discriminated Against (Mode=1):		
1 Yes	62.3	1:20
2 No	37.7	1:35

Hypotheses

Hypothesis 1 (Demographic):

1. Race: Race will be a predictor for downward assimilation, more specifically those most visibly different from the white mainstream will be more likely to experience downward assimilation.

Hypothesis 2 (Length of Residence):

1. Time in U.S.: Individuals born in the U.S. or living in the U.S. a substantial period of time will be more likely to experience downward assimilation than more recent immigrant arrivals.

Hypothesis 3 (Educational-Related Variables):

1. Educational Expectations: Higher educational aspirations will yield lower rates of downward assimilation; individuals who realistically plan to obtain a four year college degree (or above) will be less likely to experience downward assimilation.
2. Educational Expectations of Peers: Peer influence will be a predictor of downward assimilation; individuals who associate with peers planning to attend college will be less likely to experience downward assimilation.

Hypothesis 4 (Family Composition/Dynamics):

1. Time Spent with Family: Children from families who spend more time together will be less likely to experience downward assimilation.
2. Parental Socioeconomic Status: Low parental SES will yield higher rates of downward assimilation.
3. Parent Job Loss: High schoolers who are affected by the stress of parental job loss will be more likely to experience downward assimilation.

Hypothesis 5 (Acculturative Path):

1. Dissonant Acculturation: Higher levels of dissonance will yield higher rates of downward assimilation.

Hypothesis 6 (Discrimination):

1. Perceived Discrimination: Individuals who have felt discriminated against will be more likely to experience downward assimilation.

Note: Because the hypotheses are all directional, one-sided significance tests are used for the independent variables.

RESULTS

Model 1: In Model 1 (see Table 2), race and time in the U.S. are examined. As expected, race yields significant findings. The category for black respondents is highly significant (p=.001). Furthermore, the odds ratio value (ExpB=3.20) indicates that black second-generation immigrants are over three times more likely than whites to have served time as young adults. According to the odds ratio value for the Asian variable, Asian immigrant youth are about 50% more likely than whites to serve time as young adults; in this model however, this value is not significant (p=.088). The multiracial category is significant (p=.031), and the odds ratio value indicates that multiracial youth are 86% more likely than whites to serve time. Finally, the values for the "other" race category are highly significant (p=.001), and the odds ratio value for this variable (ExpB=2.28) suggests that the odds of individuals in this category being incarcerated are more than double that of whites. Keeping the crosstab numbers of this variable in mind, presumably Hispanics and Mexicans/Mexican-Americans are the ones who most heavily impact the significance of this racial category.

The next variable examines the impact of the amount of time living in the U.S. When compared to post-1983 immigrant arrivals, native-born and pre-1984 arrivals are significantly (p=.003) more likely to serve time. More specifically the odds ratio value shows that second-generation immigrants who are born in the U.S. or who have been living here a substantial length of time (at least 18 to 20 years) are more than twice as likely (ExpB=2.24) to be incarcerated during early adulthood than newer arrivals (those living here less than 18 years). Values for lambda yield desirable results (see discussion of lambda in the *Variables* section of this paper). Lambda is highly significant (p=.000), indicating that

there was significant sample attrition bias in the *CILS* and the use of lambda is therefore necessary. Furthermore, the coefficient is positive meaning that missing respondents are more similar to those who had served time than those who had not, and the odds ratio (ExpB=1.71) indicates that missing *CILS* respondents are about 70% more prone to incarceration in early adulthood than those who participated in the entire *CILS* study. Also, the values for men are highly significant (p=.000), and the odds ratio value (ExpB=5.52) indicates that the odds of men serving time are more than five times greater than those of women. Finally, the Nagelkerke R^2 value (R^2=.153) indicates that the variables incorporated into this model, gender, race, and time in the U.S., account for 15% of the differences between incarcerated and non-incarcerated individuals.

Model 2: In Model 2, variables are added to measure the impact of educational expectations of respondents and educational plans of their friends. The results show that teenagers who in high school believe a college degree or above is realistically attainable are significantly (p=.002) less likely to be incarcerated as young adults than those who do not see a college degree as a realistic option in their futures. More specifically, the odds ratio value indicates that they are nearly 50% less likely (ExpB=.520). The variable including those who said many or most of their friends were planning to go to a four year college, is also significant (p=.006), and the odds ratio value (ExpB= .557) shows that teenagers who associate mostly with college-bound peers are themselves about 45% less likely to be incarcerated in the years following high school.

The values of the remaining variables in this model are, for the most part, similar to their values in Model 1. The odds of blacks being incarcerated are significantly (p=.000)

greater than whites, and in this model they are about five times more likely to serve time (ExpB=4.97). The values for Asians have a stronger impact in this model than in the previous one, and the significance level is now within the 95% confidence interval (p=.036). The odds ratio indicates that second-generation Asians are 90% more likely to serve time as young adults than their white counterparts (ExpB=1.90). The multiracial category, as in the previous model, is significant (p=.033), and the odds ratio shows that multiracial individuals are about twice as likely to be incarcerated as young adults than whites (ExpB=2.09). As far as the "other" category variable is concerned, it remains significant, and the odds of these individuals serving time are more than two times greater than the odds of whites immigrants serving time (p=.005, ExpB=2.33). Individuals living in the U.S. for at least 18 years remain significantly (p=.018) more likely to be incarcerated as young adults, by about 88% (ExpB=1.88). Lambda is again highly significant (p=.000) continuing to indicate that missing respondents are more similar to those who had served time than those who had not, and according to the odds ratio, lost *CILS* respondents are about 48% more likely to be incarcerated in young adulthood (ExpB=1.48) than those who participated in the entire study. The statistics for men, also still highly significant (p=.000), continue to suggest that men are five times more likely than women to be incarcerated (ExpB=5.04). The Nagelkerke R^2 value (R^2=.158) shows that the variables in Model 2 account for almost 16% of the differences between incarcerated and non-incarcerated individuals.

Model3: In Model 3, family related variables are incorporated. Again, these variables include a measure from the *CILS-II* that gauged the amount of free time that respondents and their families liked to spend together ("rarely" and sometimes), a comprehensive parental

socioeconomic status index variable from the *CILS-I*, and a variable from the *CILS-II* asking respondents if one of their parents had lost his/her job at some point in the three years prior. Regarding free time spent with family, the variable representing individuals whose immediate families never like to spend their free time together or only liked to spend their free time together once in a while ("rarely"), is significant (p=.003). More specifically, these individuals are 96% more likely to be incarcerated than those whose families often or always like to spend their free time together (Exp=1.96). Those whose families sometimes like to spend free time together, is insignificant (p=.163), but the odds ratio values does indicate that they are slightly more likely to serve time (ExpB=1.29). Contrary to expectations, parental socioeconomic status is highly insignificant (p=.381), and furthermore, the odds ratio value, essentially equivalent to a value of 1, is completely meaningless (ExpB=1.05). The variable representing teenagers who had at least one parent who lost a job between their completing the *CILS-I* and the *CILS-II* (which, for most, was between their 8^{th}-9^{th} and 11^{th}-12^{th} grade years) is significant (p=.008), and the odds ratio value indicates that high schoolers who have to deal with the stress of their parents having lost a job and the assumed strains that ensue are almost 70% more likely (ExpB=1.69) to be incarcerated in the years following high school than those who are not affected by such circumstances.

Concerning the remaining variables, most values are comparable to those in previous models. Blacks continue to be significantly more likely than whites to be incarcerated (p=.000; ExpB=4.90). As seen in the previous model, the values for Asians demonstrate increasing strength (p=.024, ExpB=2.01). Because of these unusual shifts, a spurious effect stemming from education-related, and now family-related, variables is possible; therefore,

interpretation of this variable, especially in this particular model, should be approached with caution. Multiracial individuals are now outside of the 95% confidence interval (p=.056), but the odds ratio (ExpB=1.93) continues to indicate that they are nearly two times more likely to serve time than white youth. Individuals in the "other" race category continue to be significantly more likely to be incarcerated than whites (p=.009; ExpB=2.37). U.S. born children of immigrants and those living in the U.S. at least 18 years, still significant (p=.015), are about twice as likely to serve time (ExpB=1.98) than those living in the U.S. less than 18 years.

"College degree realistically attainable" remains significant (p=.006), indicating that teenagers who in high school believe a four year college degree or above is realistic option are about 45% less likely to serve time as young adults (ExpB=.555). Also, high-schoolers who associate mainly with peers planning to attend a four year college are themselves significantly less likely to serve time (p=.011, ExpB=.585). Lambda remains highly significant (p=.000), continuing to indicate that missing *CILS* respondents are more likely to have had higher incarceration rates than those who completed all three phases (ExpB=1.52). Similarly, men remain about five times more likely to serve time than women (p=.000; ExpB=5.10). Finally, the Nagelkerke R^2 value (R^2=.179) increased by a couple percent from the previous model. Therefore, with the addition of family-related variables, about 18% of the differences between incarcerated and non-incarcerated respondents are now explained.

Model 4: In this final model, dissonant acculturation and feelings of discrimination are added to the model. Each of these variables demonstrates a relationship in the direction hypothesized. The variable measuring dissonant acculturation is significant (p=.020), and the

odds ratio value (ExpB=1.56) indicates that individuals who, as young teenagers, experience a high level of dissonance between themselves and their parents for doing things culturally different are about 56% more likely to be incarcerated as young adults than those who very rarely or never get in trouble with their parents for their differing cultural preferences. The variable measuring feelings of discrimination is also significant (p=.024), and the odds ratio (ExpB=1.60) shows that high schoolers who feel discriminated against are 60% more likely to serve time as young adults than those who do not experience such feelings.

Regarding all other variables, there are a few shifts in the race categories. While the values for blacks essentially remain the same (p=.001, ExpB=4.24), the spurious effect that was seen with Asians in the previous model is slightly diminished, but the values remain significant (p=.040, ExpB=1.92). The multiracial category is again insignificant (p=.068, ExpB=1.85). Regarding the "other" race category, the values remain significant (p=.007) still suggesting that these individuals are more than twice as likely to have been incarcerated by the time they are young adults than whites (ExpB=2.32). In this model, time in country remains significant (p=.038), and the odds of incarceration for native-born and immigrants living in the U.S. at least 18 years are 80% greater (ExpB=1.80) than those living here less than 18 years.

Those who believed a four year degree was attainable remain significantly less likely to serve time by almost 45% (p=.008, ExpB=.561); similarly, those who said that most of their friends planned to go to college remain significantly less likely to be incarcerated as young adults as well, by about 40% (p=.016, ExpB=.601). As in the previous model, teenagers whose families very rarely spend free time together are significantly (p=.006) more

likely to serve time in young adulthood (ExpB=1.89) than those who often or always do; the values for those whose families sometimes spent free time together are again insignificant (p=.146, ExpB=1.32). Also, parental socioeconomic status remains completely meaningless in the model (p=.402, ExpB=1.04) while the variable representing high schoolers who had at least one parent to lose his/her job continues to be significant (p=.005, ExpB=1.75). In this final model, the values for lambda are again significant (p=.001, ExpB=1.46), and the values for men are comparable to all previous models (p=.000, ExpB=5.28). The Nagelkerke R^2 value (R^2=.184), in this model, accounts for just over 18% of the variances between those who had served time and those who had not.

Table 2

	Model 1 (N=3,077)	Model 2 (N=2,785)	Model 3 (N=2,757)	Model 4 (N=2,731)
Demographics:				
Race (White):				
Black	3.20***	4.95***	4.90***	4.24***
Asian	1.51	1.90*	2.01*	1.92*
Multiracial	1.86*	2.09*	1.93	1.78
Other	2.28***	2.31**	2.46**	2.32**
Length of Residence:				
Time in U.S. (Post '83 arrivals):				
U.S. Born & Pre '84 arrivals	2.24**	1.88*	1.98*	1.80*
Education-Related:				
Educational Expectations (No College Degree):				
College Degree Attainable		.520**	.555**	.561**
Friends' Goals (Few Going to College)				
Most Going to College		.557**	.585*	.601*
Family-Related:				
Spends Time with Family (Often):				
Sometimes			1.29	1.32
Rarely			1.96**	1.89**
Socioeconomic Status (N/A):				
Parental SES			1.05	1.04
Parent Job Loss (No):				
Parent Lost Job (in 3 yrs between *CILS-I* & *II*)			1.69**	1.75**
Acculturative Path:				
Dissonant Acculturation (Rarely Clash with Parents):				
Often Clash with Parents				1.56*
Discrimination:				
Feelings of Discrimination (No):				
Has Felt Discriminated Against				1.60*
Control Variables:				
Lambda	1.71***	1.48***	1.52***	1.46***
Gender (Females):				
Males	5.52***	5.04***	5.10***	5.17***
R^2 (Nagelkerke)	**.153**	**.158**	**.179**	**.184**
Constant	**.002*** **	**.006*** **	**.001*** **	**.001*** **

NOTE: p≤.001***, p≤.01**, p≤.05*

1. Reference categories are in parentheses next to bolded variables (see *Variables* section for detailed descriptions of all variables).

2. Values in Table 2 represent the odds ratio for each dummy variable as compared to its reference category.

DISCUSSION

For the most part, the results for this study were consistent with the initial expectations. In the first model, race and length of residence in the U.S. were both significant, meaning that the null hypothesis that there is no difference within these variables when compared to the event of the dependent variable (time served) can be rejected. The results for the race variable also indicate that those with racial identities different from the white mainstream are more likely to experience downward assimilation. This was especially true for the black and other race (which is majority Hispanic and Mexican/Mexican American) categories as they remain highly significant throughout all four models. These results therefore support the stated hypothesis that individuals more racially different from the white mainstream are more likely to experience downward assimilation as they integrate into American society. The final variable in the first model indicates that substantial time spent living in the U.S. or being born in the U.S. are risk factors for downward assimilation. Individuals who were either native-born or had been living here at least 18 years were significantly more likely to have served time as young adults. Based on this, one can presume that as time spent living in the country increases so does the possibility of downward assimilation; furthermore, from this finding, one could argue support of the idea that for some immigrant youth the process of "Americanization" leads to downward assimilation as predicted by segmented assimilation theory. Also in this model, and all remaining models, both control variables (gender and lambda) are significant. The results for gender are useful for the purpose of generalization as they further confirm the notion that men are incredible more likely than women to serve time.

In the second model, education variables are added, and they also yield expected results. Respondents who in high school viewed college as a viable option in the future showed to be less prone to incarceration than those who did not see a college degree as a realistic possibility. This finding helps to support the idea that those who come to delegitimize the power of education as a tool for progression are more likely to experience downward assimilation. Also, peer influence appears to be a significant and influential factor shaping the direction of assimilation. Those who in high school associate mostly with peers who plan to attend a four year college are themselves less likely to experience downward assimilation.

In the third model, family related variables are incorporated and yield some significant findings as well. Consistent with speculations of Portes and Rumbaut (2001) family composition appears to play a role in shaping the assimilation process, but contrary to their ideas and the hypothesis stated in this research project, parental socioeconomic status is not a significant predictor in any of the models in which it is incorporated. Because the lambda variable also included a measure for socioeconomic status, I ran the models without it to determine if there was any difference. Even without lambda, parental socioeconomic status remained completely insignificant.

When compared against families who like to spend a lot of free time together, high schoolers from families that never or hardly ever spend free time together are also significantly more likely to assimilate toward the lower realms of American society by young adulthood. This supports the idea that children who grow up in close knit families are more protected from negative environmental influences (Portes and Rumbaut, 2001). Also,

respondents who reported that one of their parents had lost his/her job during the years between the *CILS-I* and the *CILS-II* proved to be a significant factor in whether they had been incarcerated as young adults. This variable is a representation, at least to some extent, of parental SES because it measures elements of financial strains and stresses within the family. Therefore, despite the fact that the parental socioeconomic status index variable is completely meaningless in all of the models, the significance of this variable arguably helps to support the idea that financial or economic related factors, especially in the form of job availability and opportunity, do in fact impact teenagers and their likelihood of incarceration in early adulthood. This argument may also be supported by the fact that this measure was obtained when respondents were in 11th or 12th grade in high school versus of 8th or 9th grade (which is when the parental SES index variable was obtained) and therefore they were more effected by the circumstances in the following few years.

The findings for the first variable added to Model 4 further support the idea that family infrastructure and parent-child relationships impact the overall assimilation process. The measure for dissonant acculturation is significant and therefore indicates the power of intergenerational strains that can emerge as a result of varying cultural preferences. Respondents who as 8th and 9th graders experienced high levels of dissonance with their parents for doing things differently were more likely to have negative assimilative outcomes as young adults. The second variable added to the final model, which is also significant, shows that feelings of discrimination can also have harsh, long-term effects. Teenagers who feel discriminated against are more likely to have been incarcerated by the time they are young adults. This finding is consistent with a number of theorists (Ogbu 1978, Portes and

Zhou 1993, Zhou 1997, Benson 2003) who attest to the negative impact of continued discrimination and blocked paths to legitimate means of upward mobility and the ultimate role that those experiences might play in the assimilation process.

CONCLUSION

Overview

There are a number of factors that affect assimilation for immigrants into American society. The purpose of this research paper was to determine which factors, in particular, drive individuals in a downward path as they assimilate. Operating on the theoretical framework of segmented assimilation, I examined a number of variables to determine their impact as early predictors of downward assimilation, and with time served as the dependent variable, several significant factors emerged. Furthermore, with the exception of parental socioeconomic status, the findings for the independent variables indicated significant relationships in the hypothesized directions.

Regarding race, the findings supported the hypothesis that non-white individuals would be more likely to experience downward assimilation. More specifically, blacks, Hispanics and Mexicans/Mexican-Americans were the most likely, which further supports the notion that those most racially different from the American mainstream are the most apt to a downward assimilative path. Consistent with the hypothesis about length of residence, the results showed that individuals who were either native-born or had been living in the U.S. for at least 18 years were significantly more likely to serve time than those living in the country for less than 18 years. This coincides with the findings of Rumbaut et al. (2006) who suggested that the process of "Americanization" puts some individuals in greater risk of downward assimilation. The hypotheses predicting the impact of educational expectations and the impact of peers' educational plans were also supported by the findings. Respondents who viewed (and presumably valued) advanced education as a viable and legitimate option

for the future were less likely to fall into a downward assimilative path. Similarly, those who associated with a majority of peers planning to attend college were also less likely to endure these negative consequences. Both of these findings echo the ideas of Zhou (1997) discussed earlier (see pgs. 17-18).

Consistent to Portes and Rumbaut (2001), family dynamics were also significant factors in the models of this study. As hypothesized, children from families who did not place importance on spending time together were more prone to downward assimilation. Arguably, this finding provides support to the idea that children of immigrants from close-knit families and communities are actually protected from some negative external influences. Regarding parental socioeconomic status, however, the findings did not support the ideas of segmented assimilation theorists (Portes and Rumbaut 2001; Zhou 1997; Portes and Zhou 1993), and they were also inconsistent with the hypothesis that low parental SES would be a significant early predictor of downward assimilation. Parental job-loss, however, was significant which indicates that economic-related factors, and more specifically limited access to job opportunities, do in fact impact the assimilation process.

As hypothesized, children who experienced higher levels of conflict with their parents because of their clashing cultural preferences were at an increased risk for downward assimilation. This finding further supports the strength of family dynamics and is also consistent with Portes and Rumbaut (2001) who suggest that dissonant acculturation can be problematic for immigrant children as they assimilate. The impact of feeling discriminated against also yielded expected results, indicating that successful assimilation may be hindered not only by discrimination itself but also by the internalized feelings that it evokes within

those who encounter and endure it. Theoretically consistent with a number of others (Portes and Rumbaut, 2001; Portes and Zhou, 1993; Zhou 1997; Benson, 2003; Freeman, 2002; Obgu, 1978; Vickerman, 1999), I believe that the significance of discrimination in the final model may actually be implicative of its broader impact on other factors examined in this study, such as time in country, educational aspirations, and race (especially as it relates to incarceration as the dependent variable).

Limitations and Suggestions

The main limitation of this research project is that the dependent variable is not an all-encompassing measure of downward assimilation. While I fully believe in the strength of this variable as a form of downward assimilation, I recognize that it is also a gendered outcome. Therefore, it is limited in its capacity to represent the full range of individuals who assimilate downward into society. Also, based on the somewhat ambiguous wording of the dependent variable (see Appendix), the accuracy of the results may be slightly compromised. This may especially be true regarding the surprising findings for socioeconomic status. For example, an individual who spent a couple nights in the county jail as a result of a drunkened spring break escapade in college is likely to have come from a drastically different socioeconomic background than one who served several years in federal prison for selling illegal drugs in order to take care of his family.

My suggestions to future researchers who are interested in determining factors that drive individuals in downward direction would be to construct a more comprehensive measure for downward assimilation and one that is less gender specific. One possible variable that might fulfill these requirements is low-educational attainment. Another is low-

occupational status. Using these factors may help to diminish issues with gender bias while also encompassing a wider scope of individuals. One thing to be careful about if using this type of measure, however, is not to confuse downward assimilation with downward mobility. While it is likely that the two often co-exist and in some cases are interrelated, it is not a good idea to analyze them as interchangeable sociological entities.

Another suggestion that I would recommend for future research endeavors would be to examine gender not as a control variable but instead as a possible predictor of downward assimilation. Perhaps, the significance of gender in this research project is not a reflection of limitations in the dependent variable but instead an indication of its broader impact on the assimilation process. I propose that this is a feasible possibility because I believe that some forms of downward assimilation that are typically more male-specific (i.e. prolonged gang involvement, incarceration etc.) yield harsher negative long-term consequences than those that are female-specific (i.e. unplanned pregnancy outside of marriage).

APPENDIX

v448l R spent time in a reform school, detention center, jail or prison

0 No
1 Yes

During the last five years, have any of the following life change events happened to you or your family?

	Yes	No
a. I moved to a new home	O	O
b. I was divorced or separated	O	O
c. I got married	O	O
d. I lost my job	O	O
e. I became seriously ill or disabled	O	O
f. One of my parents died	O	O
g. A member of my family was the victim of a crime	O	O
h. I was the victim of a crime	O	O
i. A member of my family was arrested	O	O
j. I was arrested	O	O
k. A family member spent time in a reform school, detention center, jail or prison	O	O
l. I spent time in a reform school, detention center, jail or prison	O	O
m. I graduated from college	O	O
o. I had to take responsibility for caring for a seriously ill or disabled family member	O	O

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